



The Education Trust–New York

Testimony for Joint Legislative Public Hearing on 2023 Executive Budget Proposal: Elementary & Secondary Education

Dear Chairpersons and honorable members of the legislature,

Thank you for your continued service to the state of New York during the ongoing pandemic and continued uncertainty. Thank you, also, for the opportunity to offer testimony as you review the budget proposals in the executive budget.

I am Dr. Dia Bryant, the executive director of The Education Trust–New York. Ed Trust–NY is a non-profit, non-partisan research, policy and advocacy organization that works to advance educational equity beginning at birth through college and into the workforce. Our mission is to attain educational justice through research, policy, and advocacy that results in all students – especially those from low-income backgrounds and communities of color – achieving at high levels from birth through college completion and entry into the workforce. Our work is data-centered and student-focused, and we work in close partnership with civil rights, education, parent, and business organizations across the state in the New York Equity Coalition, Raising NY coalition, and the REACH NY network.

Governor Hochul’s 2023 Executive Budget includes a number of critical investments that will help to support New York’s children and families beginning at birth through college and into the workforce. The Executive Budget recognizes the incredible toll the ongoing pandemic is taking on New Yorkers and promises to offer much-needed supports to help students and families get back on track and recover mentally, academically, and economically. As this budget season and legislative session progresses, *we urge lawmakers to make a commitment to New York families by protecting the provisions that aim to foster more equity for all of our residents, and by also considering other critical equity proposals that would benefit New Yorkers for years to come.*

Among these key equity investments in k-12 are the following:

- **Addressing lost instructional time and mental health.** Our polling throughout the pandemic has consistently found that the vast majority of parents are concerned about how the pandemic is impacting their children academically and mentally, with an astounding 94% of parents indicating in September that they were concerned about how schools were supporting their child’s emotional well-being. This budget’s investment of \$100 million over two years into the Recover from COVID School Program provides much-needed financial support to districts serving students with the greatest needs to offer resources such as summer learning, afterschool programs, and access to mental health services. Read our September poll findings [here](#).
- **Providing free meals for students.** Our September poll found that nearly half of Black parents (48%) and 43% of Latinx parents skipped or reduced the size of their own and/or their child’s meals as a result of the pandemic. No child should go hungry, and the continuation of free school meals for all students regardless of income eligibility is a starting point that will benefit approximately three million students attending nearly 6,000 public and nonpublic schools in New York State. Read our September poll findings [here](#).
- **Investing in housing for runaway and unhoused youth.** The Executive Budget’s proposed \$2 million increase in funding for runaway and unhoused youth services will provide critical resources to some of our most vulnerable students, providing them with some stability and

support at a time of tremendous uncertainty. Learn how New York can support students experiencing homelessness during the pandemic [here](#).

There are areas within the Executive Budget that offer some room for more equity investments. Given the ongoing challenges that our education systems continue to encounter.

We ask for continued investments in:

- **Explicit strategies to improve diversity in the educator workforce.** Gov. Hochul included in her State of the State several priorities that would prioritize diversity in the K-12 educator workforce, including the creation of the Empire State Teacher Residency Program, funding for a new cohort of the Master Teacher Program, and support for school staff members interested in earning their professional certification. These investments are all worthy of further exploration as New York seeks to foster an educator workforce that reflects the rich diversity of the state. Additionally, the Executive Budget proposes investing \$106 million for additional full-time faculty at SUNY and CUNY. This investment should be coupled with a commitment to recruiting and retaining a diverse and representative staff in the higher education system. Learn more about educator diversity in New York [here](#).
- **Improving access to advanced courses.** Even before the pandemic, students from low-income backgrounds and American Indian, Black, and Latinx students were less likely to be enrolled in key advanced courses than their not-low-income and White peers. Legislation introduced by Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes and Senator John Liu would ensure that more students have the opportunity to participate in these courses. Additionally, Gov. Hochul's State of the State included a proposal to expand access to dual enrollment programs that would allow high school students to simultaneously earn postsecondary credits. This investment is still worth consideration. Any investment, however, should be directed to programs that demonstrate proven results and coupled with a requirement the New York State Education Department collect and publicly report the outcomes of any such programs receiving this funding. Learn more about access to rigorous coursework [here](#).

We are grateful for your service and hope that throughout the session the committee will keep equity at the core of any budget adjustments and amendments. It is no secret that students who were disadvantaged before the pandemic are further disadvantaged during the ongoing crises. We are hopeful to see the aforementioned items maintained in the budget and that any additions be focused on accelerating learning, creating more modalities for daily learning, and addressing exclusionary disciplinary practices.

The Ed Trust–NY team is available to discuss to the items herein. We would also like to be a resource as the committee continues to think about and design an equitable path to the academic and social emotional recovery of our students, educators, and families.

In partnership,

Dia Bryant

Dia N. Bryant, Ed.L.D.